

CIA Informer Paid Despite Link to Slaying

Clinton 'Not Satisfied' With Information on Killings in Guatemala

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The CIA paid a Guatemalan army colonel \$44,000 in 1992 for supplying information on the civil war in that country, months after it had obtained evidence linking the colonel to the 1990 slaying of a U.S. citizen in Guatemala, intelligence sources said yesterday.

CIA officers made the cash payment to Colonel Julio Roberto Alpirez after the Justice Department decided in 1992 not to pursue a criminal pros-

ecution of him. The agency went to considerable lengths to deliver the money to Alpirez in person at the remote military garrison he commanded, the sources said.

Senior U.S. officials said they could not explain why the CIA made the payment, or why Washington never pressed the Guatemalan government

to prosecute Alpirez for his alleged involvement in the slaying of William Devine, owner of a rural inn in Guatemala.

Around the time of the CIA payment, Alpirez was participating in the interrogation, torture and slaying of a Guatemalan guerrilla fighter married to a U.S. citizen, the CIA reported to the White House two months ago. But the CIA has maintained it did not know of his involvement in the earlier killing until much later.

Last month, the CIA removed its
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station chief in Guatemala for failing to report immediately in January some fresh information it received linking Alpirez to the guerrilla fighter's death, senior U.S. officials said. The station chief "sat on the information" for a week before passing it along to CIA headquarters, despite intense interest in the matter at the White House, one official said.

The CIA's links to Alpirez became public this week. The new details yesterday came to light as White House spokesman Michael McCurry acknowledged that the administration has not assembled a complete picture of the two deaths and alluded to widespread concern within the administration that the CIA may have

withheld information about the slayings to hide its ties to the alleged culprit.

McCurry, while declining to confirm the CIA's connection to Alpirez, said President Clinton was "not satisfied with the information we have at this point. . . . We don't have all the answers that we would like to have" to convey to Jennifer Harbury, the widow of slain guerrilla fighter Efraim Bamaca Velasquez.

While adding that he had no reason to believe the CIA had given the White House a misleading account of its activities during a months-long probe that ended in January, McCurry said, "If there was any information withheld . . . then the president is determined to fire anybody on the spot

responsible for withholding that information."

Harbury, though expressing relief at finally obtaining concrete information about the circumstances of her husband's death, said she is contemplating a lawsuit against the U.S. government for withholding what it knew about the involvement of Alpirez and his links to the CIA.

Harbury learned about the CIA connection this week from Rep. Robert G. Torricelli (D-N.J.), who is a member of the House Select Committee on Intelligence but said he obtained the information through unofficial channels. Administration officials have maintained they told Harbury as much as permitted by laws restricting the dissemination of information

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on Slayings in Guatemala, Aide Says

about U.S. intelligence sources, such as Alpirez.

An intelligence source said, however, that top CIA officials evidently had concerns that the agency's station chief was "too close" to his contacts in the Guatemalan military, and that these concerns played a role in the decision to remove him last month.

Intelligence sources said Alpirez was first put on the CIA payroll in the late 1980s after serving as a senior officer in the Guatemalan presidential guard and provided good information about that country's civil war between the government and rural-based leftist insurgents. In 1989, he attended a 10-month training course at the U.S. Army's School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Ga., be-

fore returning to command a military garrison near Devine's inn.

Within months after learning in October 1991 of Alpirez's role in the 1990 slaying of Devine, the sources said, the CIA stopped putting money into an escrow account it maintained for him. The sum the CIA paid Alpirez in 1992 for his information is roughly 46 times the average yearly income in Guatemala.

With regard to the slaying of Bamaca, the CIA has said it was not until December 1994 that a better source revealed that Bamaca was dead and that "the asset"—as Alpirez was known to the agency—had been present during his interrogation. The agency also has said it received more information in January that Bamaca was killed by its "asset."

Harbury said she believed the agency must have known since January 1993 that Alpirez participated in the 1992 torture of Bamaca. Another Guatemalan guerrilla fighter, Santiago Cabrera Lopez, told a hearing organized by the Organization of American States then that he witnessed the torture before escaping from the garrison where Bamaca was being held.

Secretary of State Warren Christopher, in a classified Feb. 3 cable to U.S. ambassador to Guatemala Marilyn McAfee, indicated that Washington considered Lopez's testimony credible. "Bamaca was reportedly sighted on several occasions in 1992 inside a military camp" by Lopez, the cable read. "Some senior military officers believed his testimony about having seen Bamaca."